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A National Strategic Narrative

BY: MR. Y

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PREFACE

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The United States needs a national strategic narrative. We have a national security strategy, which sets forth four core national interests and outlines a number of dimensions of an overarching strategy to advance those interests in the 21st century world. But that is a document written by specialists for specialists. It does not answer a fundamental question that more and more Americans are asking. Where is the United States going in the world? How can we get there? What are the guiding stars that will illuminate the path along the way? We need a story with a beginning, middle, and projected happy ending that will transcend our political divisions, orient us as a nation, and give us both a common direction and the confidence and commitment to get to our destination.

These questions require new answers because of the universal awareness that we are living through a time of rapid and universal change. The assumptions of the 20th century, of the U.S. as a bulwark first against fascism and then against communism, make little sense in a world in which World War II and its aftermath is as distant to young generations today as the War of 1870 was to the men who designed the United Nations and the international order in the late 1940s. Consider the description of the U.S. president as “the leader of the free world,” a phrase that encapsulated U.S. power and the structure of the global order for decades. Yet anyone under thirty today, a majority of the world’s population, likely has no idea what it means.

Moreover, the U.S. is experiencing its latest round of “declinism,” the periodic certainty that we are losing all the things that have made us a great nation. In a *National Journal* poll conducted in 2010, 47% percent of Americans rated China’s economy as the world’s strongest economy, even though today the U.S. economy is still 2 ½ times larger than the Chinese economy with only 1/6 of the population. Our crumbling roads and bridges reflect a crumbling self-confidence. Our education reformers often seem to despair that we can ever educate new generations effectively for the 21st century economy. Our health care system lags increasingly behind that of other developed nations – even behind British National Health in terms of the respective overall health of the British and American populations.

Against this backdrop, Captain Porter’s and Colonel Mykleby’s “Y article” could not come at a more propitious time. In 1947 George Kennan published “The Sources of Soviet Conduct” in *Foreign Affairs* under the pseudonym X, so as not to reveal his identity as a U.S. Foreign Service Officer. The X article gave us an intellectual framework within which to understand the rise and eventual fall of the Soviet Union and a strategy to hasten that objective. Based on that foundation, the strategic narrative of the Cold War was that the United States was **the leader of the free world against the communist world; that we would invest in containing the Soviet Union and limiting its expansion while building a dynamic economy and as just, and prosperous a society as possible**. We often departed from that narrative in practice, as George Kennan was one of the first to recognize. But it was a narrative that fit the facts of the world we perceived well enough to create and maintain a loose bipartisan national consensus for forty years.

Porter and Mykleby give us a non-partisan blueprint for understanding and reacting to the changes of the 21st century world. In one sentence, the strategic narrative of the United States in the 21st century is that we **want to become the strongest competitor and most influential player in a deeply inter-connected global system, which requires that we invest less in defense and more in sustainable prosperity and the tools of effective global engagement.**

At first reading, this sentence may not seem to mark much of a change. But look closer. The Y article narrative responds directly to five major transitions in the global system:

- 1) **From control in a closed system to credible influence in an open system.** The authors argue that Kennan's strategy of containment was designed for a closed system, in which we assumed that we could control events through deterrence, defense, and dominance of the international system. The 21st century is an open system, in which unpredictable external events/phenomena are constantly disturbing and disrupting the system. In this world control is impossible; the best we can do is to build credible influence – the ability to shape and guide global trends in the direction that serves our values and interests (prosperity and security) within an interdependent strategic ecosystem. In other words, the U.S. should stop trying to dominate and direct global events. The best we can do is to build our capital so that we can influence events as they arise.
- 2) **From containment to sustainment.** The move from control to credible influence as a fundamental strategic goal requires a shift from containment to sustainment (sustainability). Instead of trying to contain others (the Soviet Union, terrorists, China, etc), we need to focus on sustaining ourselves in ways that build our strengths and underpin credible influence. That shift in turn means that the starting point for our strategy should be internal rather than external. The 2010 National Security Strategy did indeed focus on national renewal and global leadership, but this account makes an even stronger case for why we have to focus first and foremost on investing our resources domestically in those national resources that can be sustained, such as our youth and our natural resources (ranging from crops, livestock, and potable water to sources of energy and materials for industry). We can and must still engage internationally, of course, but only after a careful weighing of costs and benefits and with as many partners as possible. Credible influence also requires that we model the behavior we recommend for others, and that we pay close attention to the gap between our words and our deeds.
- 3) **From deterrence and defense to civilian engagement and competition.** Here in many ways is the hard nub of this narrative. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Admiral Mike Mullen has already said publicly that the U.S. deficit is our biggest national security threat. He and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates have also given speeches and written articles calling for “demilitarizing American foreign policy” and investing more in the tools of civilian engagements – diplomacy and defense. As we modernize our military and cut spending the tools of 20th century warfare, we must also invest in a security complex that includes *all* domestic and foreign policy assets. Our credibility also requires a willingness to compete with others. Instead of defeatism and protectionism, we must embrace competition as a way to make ourselves stronger and better (e.g. Ford today, now competing with Toyota on electric cars). A willingness to compete means a new narrative on trade and a new willingness to invest in the skills, education, energy sources, and infrastructure necessary to make our products competitive.

4) **From zero sum to positive sum global politics/economics.** An interdependent world creates many converging interests and opportunities for positive-sum rather than zero-sum competition. The threats that come from interdependence (economic instability, global pandemics, global terrorist and criminal networks) also create common interests in countering those threats domestically and internationally. President Obama has often emphasized the significance of moving toward positive sum politics. To take only one example, the rise of China as a major economic power has been overall very positive for the U.S. economy and the prosperity and stability of East Asia. The United States must be careful to guard our interests and those of our allies, but we miss great opportunities if we assume that the rise of some necessarily means the decline of others.

5) **From national security to national prosperity and security.** The piece closes with a call for a National Prosperity and Security Act to replace the National Security Act of 1947. The term “national security” only entered the foreign policy lexicon after 1947 to reflect the merger of defense and foreign affairs. Today our security lies as much or more in our prosperity as in our military capabilities. Our vocabulary, our institutions, and our assumptions must reflect that shift. “National security” has become a trump card, justifying military spending even as the domestic foundations of our national strength are crumbling. “National prosperity and security” reminds us where our true security begins. Foreign policy pundits have long called for an overhaul of NSC 68, the blueprint for the national security state that accompanied the grand strategy of containment. If we are truly to become the strongest competitor and most influential player in the deeply interconnected world of the 21st century, then we need a new blueprint.

A narrative is a story. A national strategic narrative must be a story that all Americans can understand and identify with in their own lives. America’s national story has always see-sawed between exceptionalism and universalism. We think that we are an exceptional nation, but a core part of that exceptionalism is a commitment to universal values – to the equality of all human beings not just within the borders of the United States, but around the world. We should thus embrace the rise of other nations when that rise is powered by expanded prosperity, opportunity, and dignity for their peoples. In such a world we do not need to see ourselves as the automatic leader of any bloc of nations. We should be prepared instead to earn our influence through our ability to compete with other nations, the evident prosperity and wellbeing of our people, and our ability to engage not just with states but with societies in all their richness and complexity. We do not want to be the sole superpower that billions of people around the world have learned to hate from fear of our military might. We seek instead to be the nation other nations listen to, rely on and emulate out of respect and admiration.

The Y article is the first step down that new path. It is written by two military men who have put their lives on the line in the defense of their country and who are non-partisan by profession and conviction. Their insights and ideas should spark a national conversation. All it takes is for politicians, pundits, journalists, businesspeople, civic leaders, and engaged citizens across the country to read and respond.

A NATIONAL STRATEGIC NARRATIVE

By Mr. Y

This Strategic Narrative is intended to frame our National policy decisions regarding investment, security, economic development, the environment, and engagement well into this century. It is built upon the premise that we must sustain our enduring national interests – prosperity and security – within a “strategic ecosystem,” at home and abroad; that in complexity and uncertainty, there are opportunities and hope, as well as challenges, risk, and threat. The primary approach this Strategic Narrative advocates to achieve sustainable prosperity and security, is through the application of credible influence and strength, the pursuit of fair competition, acknowledgement of interdependencies and converging interests, and adaptation to complex, dynamic systems – all bounded by our national values.

From Containment to Sustainment: Control to Credible Influence

For those who believe that hope is not a strategy, America must seem a strange contradiction of anachronistic values and enduring interests amidst a constantly changing global environment. America is a country conceived in liberty, founded on hope, and built upon the notion that anything is possible with enough hard work and imagination. Over time we have continued to learn and mature even as we strive to remain true to those values our founding fathers set forth in the Declaration of Independence and our Constitution.

America’s national strategy in the second half of the last century was anchored in the belief that our global environment is a closed system to be controlled by mankind – through technology, power, and determination – to achieve security and prosperity. From that perspective, anything that challenged our national interests was perceived as a threat or a risk to be managed. For forty years our nation prospered and was kept secure through a strategy of *containment*. That strategy relied on control, deterrence, and the conviction that given the choice, people the world over share our vision for a better tomorrow. America emerged from the Twentieth Century as the most powerful nation on earth. But we failed to recognize that dominance, like fossil fuel, is not a sustainable source of energy. The new century brought with it a reminder that the world, in fact, is a complex, open system – constantly changing. And change brings with it uncertainty. What we really failed to recognize, is that in uncertainty and change, there is opportunity and hope.

It is time for America to re-focus our national interests and principles through a long lens on the global environment of tomorrow. It is time to move beyond a strategy of *containment* to a strategy of *sustainment* (sustainability); from an emphasis on *power* and *control* to an emphasis on *strength* and *influence*; from a defensive posture of *exclusion*, to a proactive posture of *engagement*. We must recognize that security means more than defense, and sustaining security requires adaptation and evolution, the leverage of converging interests and interdependencies. To grow we must accept that competitors are not necessarily adversaries, and that a *winner* does not demand a *loser*. We must regain our credibility as a leader among peers, a beacon of hope, rather than an island fortress. It is only by balancing our interests with our principles that we can truly hope to sustain our growth as a nation and to restore our credibility as a world leader.

As we focus on the opportunities within our strategic environment, however, we must also address risk and threat. It is important to recognize that developing *credible influence* to pursue our enduring national interests in a sustainable manner requires strength with restraint, power with patience, deterrence with detente. The economic, diplomatic, educational, military, and commercial tools through which we foster that credibility must always be tempered and hardened by the values that define us as a people.

Our Values and Enduring National Interests

America was founded on the core values and principles enshrined in our Constitution and proven through war and peace. These values have served as both our anchor and our compass, at home and abroad, for more than two centuries. Our values define our national character, and they are our source of credibility and legitimacy in everything we do. Our values provide the bounds within which we pursue our enduring national interests. When these values are no longer sustainable, we have failed as a nation, because without our values, America has no credibility. As we continue to evolve, these values are reflected in a wider global application: tolerance for all cultures, races, and religions; global opportunity for self-fulfillment; human dignity and freedom from exploitation; justice with compassion and equality under internationally recognized rule of law; sovereignty without tyranny, with assured freedom of expression; and an environment for entrepreneurial freedom and global prosperity, with access to markets, plentiful water and arable soil, clean and abundant energy, and adequate health services.

From the earliest days of the Republic, America has depended on a vibrant free market and an indomitable entrepreneurial spirit to be the engines of our prosperity. Our strength as a world leader is largely derived from the central role we play in the global economy. Since the Bretton Woods agreement of 1944, the United States has been viewed as an anchor of global economic security and the U.S. dollar has served as an internationally recognized medium of exchange, the monetary standard. The American economy is the strongest in the world and likely to remain so well into the foreseeable future. Yet, while the dramatic acceleration of globalization over the last fifteen years has provided for the cultural, intellectual and social comingling among people on every continent, of every race, and of every ideology, it has also increased international economic interdependence and has made a narrowly domestic economic perspective an unattractive impossibility. Without growth and competition economies stagnate and wither, so sustaining America's prosperity requires a healthy global economy. Prosperity at home and through global economic competition and development is then, one of America's enduring national interests.

It follows logically that prosperity without security is unsustainable. Security is a state of mind, as much as it is a physical aspect of our environment. For Americans, security is very closely related to freedom, because security represents freedom from anxiety and external threat, freedom from disease and poverty, freedom from tyranny and oppression, freedom of expression but also freedom from hurtful ideologies, prejudice and violations of human rights. Security cannot be safeguarded by borders or natural barriers; freedom cannot be secured with locks or by force alone. In our complex, interdependent, and constantly changing global environment,

security is not achievable for one nation or by one people alone; rather it must be recognized as a common interest among all peoples. Otherwise, security is not sustainable, and without it there can be no peace of mind. Security, then, is our other enduring national interest.

Our Three Investment Priorities

As Americans we have access to a vast array of resources. Perhaps the most important first step we can take, as part of a National Strategy, is to identify which of these resources are renewable and sustainable, and which are finite and diminishing. Without doubt, our greatest resource is America's young people, who will shape and execute the vision needed to take this nation forward into an uncertain future. But this may require a reawakening, of sorts. Perhaps because our nation has been so blessed over time, many of us have forgotten that rewards must be earned, there is no "free ride" – that fair competition and hard work bring with them a true sense of accomplishment. We can no longer expect the ingenuity and labor of past generations to sustain our growth as a nation for generations to come. We must embrace the reality that with opportunity comes challenge, and that retooling our competitiveness requires a commitment and investment in the future.

Inherent in our children is the innovation, drive, and imagination that have made, and will continue to make, this country great. By investing energy, talent, and dollars now in the education and training of young Americans – the scientists, statesmen, industrialists, farmers, inventors, educators, clergy, artists, service members, and parents, of tomorrow – we are truly investing in our ability to successfully compete in, and influence, the strategic environment of the future. Our first investment priority, then, is intellectual capital and a sustainable infrastructure of education, health and social services to provide for the continuing development and growth of America's youth.

Our second investment priority is ensuring the nation's sustainable security – on our own soil and wherever Americans and their interests take them. As has been stated already, Americans view security in the broader context of freedom and peace of mind. Rather than focusing primarily on defense, the security we seek can only be sustained through a whole of nation approach to our domestic and foreign policies. This requires a different approach to problem solving than we have pursued previously and a hard look at the distribution of our national treasure. For too long, we have underutilized sectors of our government and our citizenry writ large, focusing intensely on defense and protectionism rather than on development and diplomacy. This has been true in our approach to domestic and foreign trade, agriculture and energy, science and technology, immigration and education, public health and crisis response, Homeland Security and military force posture. Security touches each of these and must be addressed by leveraging all the strengths of our nation, not simply those intended to keep perceived threat a safe arm's length away.

America is a resplendent, plentiful and fertile land, rich with natural resources, bounded by vast ocean spaces. Together these gifts are ours to be enjoyed for their majesty, cultivated and harvested for their abundance, and preserved for following generations. Many of these resources are renewable, some are not. But all must be respected as part of a global ecosystem

that is being tasked to support a world population projected to reach nine billion peoples midway through this century. These resources range from crops, livestock, and potable water to sources of energy and materials for industry. Our third investment priority is to develop a plan for the sustainable access to, cultivation and use of, the natural resources we need for our continued wellbeing, prosperity and economic growth in the world marketplace.

Fair Competition and Deterrence

Competition is a powerful, and often misunderstood, concept. Fair competition – of ideas and enterprises, among individuals, organizations, and nations – is what has driven Americans to achieve greatness across the spectrum of human endeavor. And yet with globalization, we seem to have developed a strange apprehension about the efficacy of our ability to apply the innovation and hard work necessary to successfully compete in a complex security and economic environment. Further, we have misunderstood interdependence as a weakness rather than recognizing it as a strength. The key to sustaining our competitive edge, at home or on the world stage, is credibility – and credibility is a difficult capital to foster. It cannot be won through intimidation and threat, it cannot be sustained through protectionism or exclusion. Credibility requires engagement, strength, and reliability – imaginatively applied through the national tools of development, diplomacy, and defense.

In many ways, deterrence is closely linked to competition. Like competition, deterrence in the truest sense is built upon strength and credibility and cannot be achieved solely through intimidation and threat. For deterrence to be effective, it must leverage converging interests and interdependencies, while differentiating and addressing diverging and conflicting interests that represent potential threats. Like competition, deterrence requires a whole of nation effort, credible influence supported by actions that are consistent with our national interests and values. When fair competition and positive influence through engagement – largely dependent on the tools of development and diplomacy – fail to dissuade the threat of destructive behavior, we will approach deterrence through a broad, interdisciplinary effort that combines development and diplomacy with defense.

A Strategic Ecology

Rather than focusing all our attention on specific threats, risks, nations, or organizations, as we have in the past, let us evaluate the trends that will shape tomorrow's strategic ecology, and seek opportunities to credibly influence these to our advantage. Among the trends that are already shaping a “new normal” in our strategic environment are the decline of rural economies, joblessness, the dramatic increase in urbanization, an increasing demand for energy, migration of populations and shifting demographics, the rise of grey and black markets, the phenomenon of extremism and anti-modernism, the effects of global climate change, the spread of pandemics and lack of access to adequate health services, and an increasing dependency on cyber networks. At first glance, these trends are cause for concern. But for Americans with vision, guided by values, they represent opportunities to reestablish and leverage credible influence, converging interests, and interdependencies that can transform despair into hope. This focus on improving

our strategic ecosystem, and favorably competing for our national interests, underscores the investment priorities cited earlier, and the imaginative application of diplomacy, development, and defense in our foreign policy.

Many of the trends affecting our environment are conditions-based. That is, they have developed within a complex system as the result of conditions left unchecked for many years. These global trends, whether manifesting themselves in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Eurasia, or within our own hemisphere impact the lives of Americans in ways that are often obscure as they propagate over vast areas with cascading and sometimes catastrophic effect.

Illiteracy, for example, is common in countries with high birth rates. High birth rates and illiteracy contribute to large labor pools and joblessness, particularly in rural areas in which changing weather conditions have resulted in desertification and soil erosion. This has led to the disruption of family and tribal support structures and the movement of large numbers of young, unskilled people into urban areas that lack infrastructure. This rapid urbanization has taxed countries with weak governance that lack rule of law, permitting the further growth of exploitative, grey and black market activities. Criminal networks prey upon and contribute to the disenfranchisement of a sizeable portion of the population in many underdeveloped nations. This concentration of disenfranchised youth, with little-to-no licit support infrastructure has provided a recruiting pool for extremists seeking political support and soldiers for local or foreign causes, often facilitated through the internet. The wars and instability perpetrated by these extremists and their armies of the disenfranchised have resulted in the displacement of many thousands more, and the further weakening of governance. This displacement has, in many cases, produced massive migrations of disparate families, tribes, and cultures seeking a more sustainable existence. This migration has further exacerbated the exploitation of the weak by criminal and ideological profiteers and has facilitated the spread of diseases across natural barriers previously considered secure. The effect has been to create a kind of subculture of despair and hopelessness that is self-perpetuating. At some point, these underlying conditions must be addressed by offering choices and options that will nudge global trends in a positive direction. America's national interests and values are not sustainable otherwise.

We cannot isolate our own prosperity and security from the global system. Even in a land as rich as ours, we too, have seen the gradual breakdown of rural communities and the rapid expansion of our cities. We have experienced migration, crime, and domestic terrorism. We struggle with joblessness and despite a low rate of illiteracy, we are losing our traditional role of innovation dominance in leading edge technologies and the sciences. We are, in the truest sense, part of an interdependent strategic ecosystem, and our interests converge with those of people in virtually every corner of the world. We must remain cognizant of this, and reconcile our domestic and foreign policies as being complementary and largely congruent.

As we pursue the growth of our own prosperity and security, the welfare of our citizens must be seen as part of a highly dynamic, and interconnected system that includes sovereign nations, world markets, natural and man-generated challenges and solutions – a system that demands adaptability and innovation. In this strategic environment, it is competition that will determine how we evolve, and Americans must have the tools and confidence required to successfully compete.

This begins at home with quality health care and education, with a vital economy and low rates of unemployment, with thriving urban centers and carefully planned rural communities, with low crime, and a sense of common purpose underwritten by personal responsibility. We often hear the term “smart power” applied to the tools of development and diplomacy abroad empowering people all over the world to improve their own lives and to help establish the stability needed to sustain security and prosperity on a global scale. But we can not export “*smart power*” until we practice “*smart growth*” at home. We must seize the opportunity to be a model of stability, a model of the values we cherish for the rest of the world to emulate. And we must ensure that our domestic policies are aligned with our foreign policies. Our own “*smart growth*” can serve as the exportable model of “*smart power*.¹ Because, truthfully, it is in our interest to see the rest of the world prosper and the world market thrive, just as it is in our interest to see our neighbors prosper and our own urban centers and rural communities come back to life.

Closing the “Say-do” Gap - the Negative Aspects of “Binning”

An important step toward re-establishing credible influence and applying it effectively is to close the “say-do” gap. This begins by avoiding the very western tendency to label or “bin” individuals, groups, organizations, and ideas. In complex systems, adaptation and variation demonstrate that “binning” is not only difficult, it often leads to unintended consequences. For example, labeling, or binning, Islamist radicals as “terrorists,” or worse, as “jihadis,” has resulted in two very different, and unfortunate unintended misperceptions: that all Muslims are thought of as “terrorists;” and, that those who pervert Islam into a hateful, anti-modernist ideology to justify unspeakable acts of violence are truly motivated by a religious struggle (the definition of “jihad,” and the obligation of all Muslims), rather than being seen as apostates waging war against society and innocents. This has resulted in the alienation of vast elements of the global Muslim community and has only frustrated efforts to accurately depict and marginalize extremism. Binning and labeling are legacies of a strategy intent on viewing the world as a closed system.

Another significant unintended consequence of binning, is that it creates divisions within our own government and between our own domestic and foreign policies. As has been noted, we cannot isolate our own prosperity and security from the global system. We exist within a strategic ecology, and our interests converge with those of people in virtually every corner of the world. We must remain cognizant of this, and reconcile our domestic and foreign policies as being complementary and largely congruent. Yet we have binned government departments, agencies, laws, authorities, and programs into lanes that lack the strategic flexibility and dynamism to effectively adapt to the global environment. This, in turn, further erodes our credibility, diminishes our influence, inhibits our competitive edge, and exacerbates the say-do gap.

The tools to be employed in pursuit of our national interests – development, diplomacy, and defense – cannot be effective if they are restricted to one government department or another. In fact, if these tools are not employed within the context of a coherent national strategy, vice being narrowly applied in isolation to individual countries or regions, they will fail to achieve a sustainable result. By recognizing the advantages of interdependence and converging interests,

domestically and internationally, we gain the strategic flexibility to sustain our national interests without compromising our values. The tools of development do not exist within the domain of one government department alone, or even one sector of society, anymore than do the tools of diplomacy or defense.

Another form of binning that impedes strategic flexibility, interdependence, and converging interests in the global system, is a geo-centric approach to foreign policy. Perhaps since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, westerners have tended to view the world as consisting of sovereign nation-states clearly distinguishable by their political borders and physical boundaries. In the latter half of the Twentieth Century a new awareness of internationalism began to dominate political thought. This notion of communities of nations and regions was further broadened by globalization. But the borderless nature of the internet, and the accompanying proliferation of stateless organizations and ideologies, has brought with it a new appreciation for the interconnectivity of today's strategic ecosystem. In this "new world order," converging interests create interdependencies. Our former notion of competition as a zero sum game that allowed for one winner and many losers, seems as inadequate today as Newton's Laws of Motion (written about the same time as the Westphalia Peace) did to Albert Einstein and quantum physicists in the early Twentieth Century. It is time to move beyond a narrow Westphalian vision of the world, and to recognize the opportunities in globalization.

Such an approach doesn't advocate the relinquishment of sovereignty as it is understood within a Westphalian construct. Indeed, sovereignty without tyranny is a fundamental American value. Neither does the recognition of a more comprehensive perspective place the interests of American citizens behind, or even on par with those of any other country on earth. It is the popular convergence of interests among peoples, nations, cultures, and movements that will determine the sustainability of prosperity and security in this century. And it is credible influence, based on values and strength that will ensure America's continuing role as a world leader. Security and prosperity are not sustainable in isolation from the rest of the global system. To close the say-do gap, we must stop behaving as if our national interests can be pursued without regard for our values.

Credible Influence in a Strategic Ecosystem

Viewed in the context of a strategic ecosystem, the global trends and conditions cited earlier are seen to be borderless. The application of credible influence to further our national interests, then, should be less about sovereign borders and geographic regions than the means and scope of its conveyance. By addressing the trends themselves, we will attract others in our environment also affected. These converging interests will create opportunities for both competition and interdependence, opportunities to positively shape these trends to mutual advantage. Whether this involves out-competing the grey and black market, funding research to develop alternate and sustainable sources of energy, adapting farming for low-water-level environments, anticipating and limiting the effects of pandemics, generating viable economies to relieve urbanization and migration, marginalizing extremism and demonstrating the futility of anti-modernism, or better managing the global information grid – international divisions among people will be less the focus than flexible and imaginative cooperation. Isolation – whether within national borders,

physical boundaries, ideologies, or cyberspace – will prove to be a great disadvantage for any competitor in the evolution of the system.

The advent of the internet and world wide web, that ushered in the information age and greatly accelerated globalization, brought with it profound second and third order effects the implications of which have yet to be fully recognized or understood. These effects include the near-instantaneous and anonymous exchange of ideas and ideologies; the sharing and manipulation of previously protected and sophisticated technologies; vast and transparent social networking that has homogenized cultures, castes, and classes; the creation of complex virtual worlds; and, a universal dependence on the global grid from every sector of society that has become almost existential. The worldwide web has also facilitated the spread of hateful and manipulative propaganda and extremism; the theft of intellectual property and sensitive information; predatory behavior and the exploitation of innocence; and the dangerous and destructive prospect of cyber warfare waged from the shadows of non-attribution and deception. Whether this revolution in communication and access to information is viewed as the democratization of ideas, or as the technological catalyst of an apocalypse, nothing has so significantly impacted our lives in the last one hundred years. Our perceptions of self, society, religion, and life itself have been challenged. But cyberspace is yet another dimension within the strategic ecosystem, offering opportunity through complex interdependence. Here, too, we must invest the resources and develop the capabilities necessary to sustain our prosperity and security without sacrificing our values.

Opportunities beyond Threat and Risk

As was stated earlier, while this Strategic Narrative advocates a focus on the *opportunities* inherent in a complex global system, it does not pretend that greed, corruption, ancient hatreds and new born apprehensions won't manifest into very real risks that could threaten our national interests and test our values. Americans must recognize this as an inevitable part of the strategic environment and continue to maintain the means to minimize, deter, or defeat these diverging or conflicting interests that threaten our security. This calls for a robust, technologically superior, and agile military – equally capable of responding to low-end, irregular conflicts and to major conventional contingency operations. But it also requires a strong and unshakable economy, a more diverse and deployable Inter Agency, and perhaps most importantly a well-informed and supportive citizenry. As has also been cited, security means far more than defense, and strength denotes more than power. We must remain committed to a whole of nation application of the tools of competition and deterrence: development, diplomacy, and defense. Our ability to look *beyond* risk and threat – to accept them as realities within a strategic ecology – and to focus on opportunities and converging interests will determine our success in pursuing our national interests in a sustainable manner while maintaining our national values. This requires the projection of credible influence and strength, as well as confidence in our capabilities as a nation. As we look ahead, we will need to determine what those capabilities should include.

As Americans, our ability to remain relevant as a world leader, to evolve as a nation, depends as it always has on our determination to pursue our national interests within the constraints of our core values. We must embrace and respect diversity and encourage the exchange of ideas,

welcoming as our own those who share our values and seek an opportunity to contribute to our nation. Innovation, imagination, and hard work must be applied through a national unity of effort that recognizes our place in the global system. We must accept that to be great requires competition and to remain great requires adaptability, that competition need not demand a single winner, and that through converging interests we should seek interdependencies that can help sustain our interests in the global strategic ecosystem. To achieve this we will need the tools of development, diplomacy and defense – employed with agility through an integrated whole of nation approach. This will require the prioritization of our investments in intellectual capital and a sustainable infrastructure of education, health and social services to provide for the continuing development and growth of America’s youth; investment in the nation’s sustainable security – on our own soil and wherever Americans and their interests take them, including space and cyberspace; and investment in sustainable access to, cultivation and use of, the natural resources we need for our continued wellbeing, prosperity and economic growth in the world marketplace. Only by developing internal strength through smart growth at home and smart power abroad, applied with strategic agility, can we muster the credible influence needed to remain a world leader.

A National Prosperity and Security Act

Having emerged from the Second World War with the strongest economy, most powerful military, and arguably the most stable model of democracy, President Truman sought to better align America’s security apparatus to face the challenges of the post-war era. He did this through the National Security Act of 1947 (NSA 47). Three years later, with the rise of Chinese communism and the first Russian test of a nuclear device, he ordered his National Security Council to consider the means with which America could confront the global spread of communism. In 1950, President Truman signed into law National Security Council finding 68 (NSC 68). Often called the “blueprint” for America’s Cold War strategy of containment, NSC 68 leveraged not only the National Security structures provided by NSA 47, but recommended funding and authorization for a Department of Defense-led strategy of containment, with other agencies and departments of the Federal government working in supporting roles. NSA 47 and NSC 68 provided the architecture, authorities and necessary resources required for a specific time in our nation’s progress.

Today, we find ourselves in a very different strategic environment than that of the last half of the Twentieth Century. The challenges and opportunities facing us are far more complex, multi-nodal, and interconnected than we could have imagined in 1950. Rather than narrowly focus on near term risk and solutions for today’s strategic environment, we must recognize the need to take a longer view, a generational view, for the sustainability of our nation’s security and prosperity. Innovation, flexibility, and resilience are critical characteristics to be cultivated if we are to maintain our competitive edge and leadership role in this century. To accomplish this, we must take a hard look at our interagency structures, authorities, and funding proportionalities. We must seek more flexibility in public / private partnerships and more fungibility across departments. We must provide the means for the functional application of development, diplomacy, and defense rather than continuing to organizationally constrain these tools. We need to pursue our priorities of education, security, and access to natural resources by adopting

sustainability as an organizing concept for a national strategy. This will require fundamental changes in policy, law, and organization.

What this calls for is a National Prosperity and Security Act, the modern day equivalent of the National Security Act of 1947. This National Prosperity and Security Act would: integrate policy across agencies and departments of the Federal government and provide for more effective public/private partnerships; increase the capacity of appropriate government departments and agencies; align Federal policies, taxation, research and development expenditures and regulations to coincide with the goals of sustainability; and, converge domestic and foreign policies toward a common purpose. Above all, this Act would provide for policy changes that foster and support the innovation and entrepreneurialism of America that are essential to sustain our qualitative growth as a people and a nation. We need a National Prosperity and Security Act and a clear plan for its application that can serve us as well in this strategic environment, as NSA 47 and NSC 68 served a generation before us.

A Beacon of Hope, a Pathway of Promise

This Narrative advocates for America to pursue her enduring interests of prosperity and security through a strategy of sustainability that is built upon the solid foundation of our national values. As Americans we needn't seek the world's friendship or to proselytize the virtues of our society. Neither do we seek to bully, intimidate, cajole, or persuade others to accept our unique values or to share our national objectives. Rather, we will let others draw their own conclusions based upon our actions. Our domestic and foreign policies will reflect unity of effort, coherency and constancy of purpose. We will pursue our national interests and allow others to pursue theirs, never betraying our values. We will seek converging interests and welcome interdependence. We will encourage fair competition and will not shy away from deterring bad behavior. We will accept our place in a complex and dynamic strategic ecosystem and use credible influence and strength to shape uncertainty into opportunities. We will be a pathway of promise and a beacon of hope, in an ever changing world.

Mr. Y is a pseudonym for CAPT Wayne Porter, USN and Col Mark "Puck" Mykleby, USMC who are actively serving military officers. The views expressed herein are their own and do not reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Marine Corps, the Department of Defense or the U.S. government.



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